

Name: _____ Date: _____

Custer and the Battle of the Little Big Horn



By 1875, so many Sioux had left their reservation that a government order went out for all the Sioux to return to the reservation by January 1, 1876. The Sioux were angry because the Northern Pacific Railroad was planning to build on land claimed by the Sioux, and miners were laying claims to Sioux land in the Black Hills of the Dakotas after gold was discovered there. The few supplies sent by the Bureau of Indian Affairs were unfit for use: the flour was moldy and the meat was spoiled. Many Sioux left the reservation to try to find food on their own.

The Sioux chief Sitting Bull established a large camp on the Little Big Horn River in Montana and refused to return to the reservation. During the spring and summer of 1876, many Sioux and members of other Native American tribes joined him.

The army sent three columns of soldiers to round up the Sioux. General George Crook marched northwest from Fort Laramie in Wyoming, Colonel John Gibbon marched east from Fort Shaw in Montana, and General Alfred Terry marched west from Fort Abraham Lincoln in the Dakota Territory. Lieutenant Colonel George A. Custer, commander of the Seventh Cavalry, was with Terry's army. Because of the large area involved, the three armies were out of contact with each other, and they had difficulty locating the Indians.

General Crook encountered a party of about 2,000 Sioux and Cheyenne led by Chief Crazy Horse at the Rosebud River on June 17, 1876. The Indians were eager to fight and caught Crook's men in the river valley. There were few casualties, and the fight ended in a draw. The warriors then left to join Sitting Bull's camp on the Little Big Horn. However, Crook sent no message to warn Custer that there were Indians in the area.

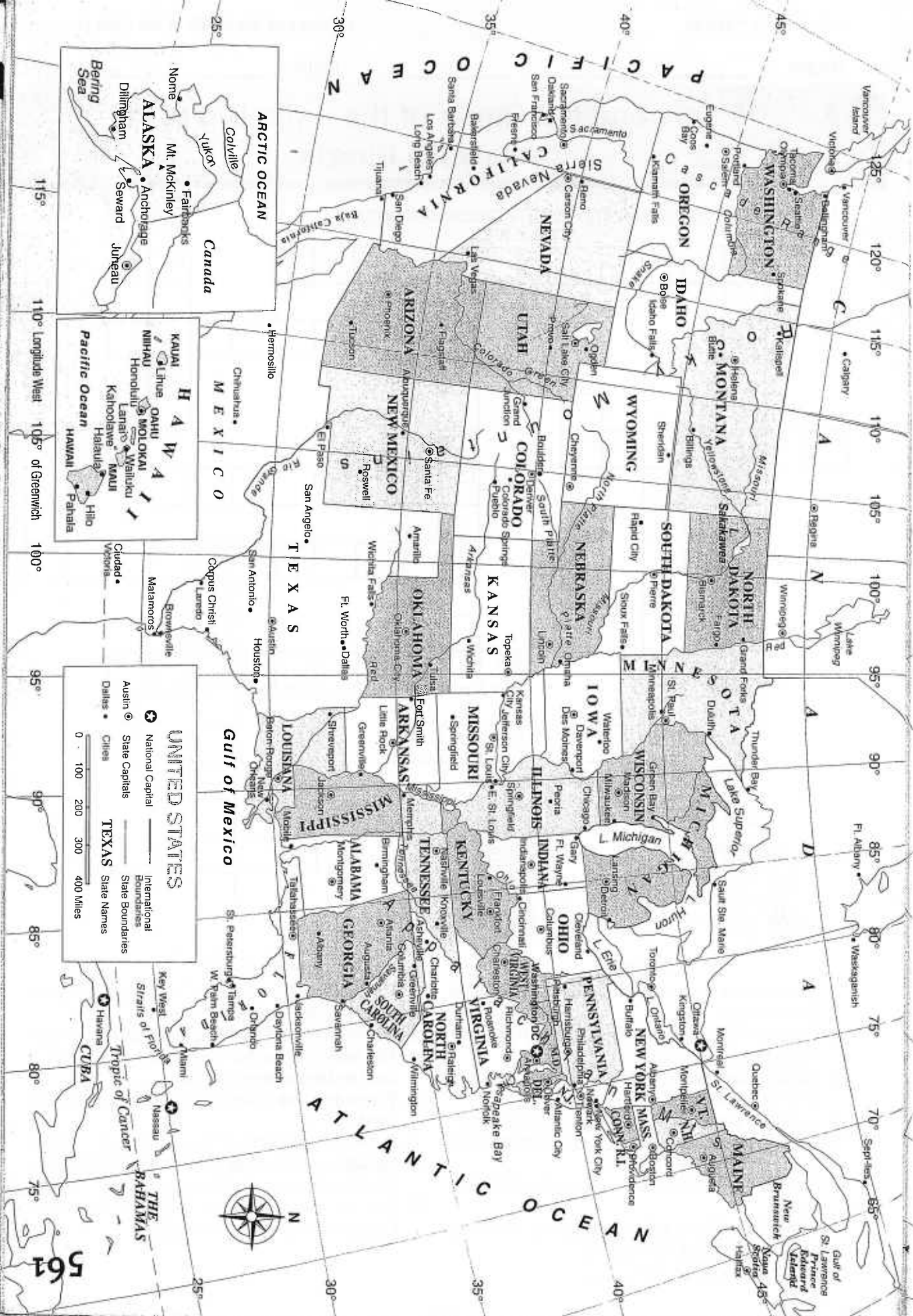
On June 22, Custer and his 655 men were ordered to search for Indians in the Little Big Horn region. He had refused to bring rapid-firing Gatling guns along because they would slow him down. He also refused to send for reinforcements when his army came across a mile-wide path of tracks of Indian horses. Instead, on June 25, he divided his men into three columns. Major Marcus Reno and Captain Fred Benteen led the other two columns. The units were widely separated and unable to do much to help each other. Reno's command came under fierce attack and took up a defensive position on a bluff. Benteen's men eventually joined them, and they were able to hold off the Indians. The main attack was against Custer's column. He and all 265 of his men were killed.

The victory was short-lived. By autumn, the Sioux were outnumbered by the army and near starvation. They surrendered and returned to the reservation.

Map Activity

As a class, use a detailed map of the United States to find the following locations.

1. Little Big Horn River
2. Rosebud River
3. Great Falls, Montana (Fort Shaw)
4. Bismarck, North Dakota (Fort Abraham Lincoln)
5. Laramie, Wyoming (Fort Laramie)
6. The Black Hills
7. Any present-day Native American reservations in the area



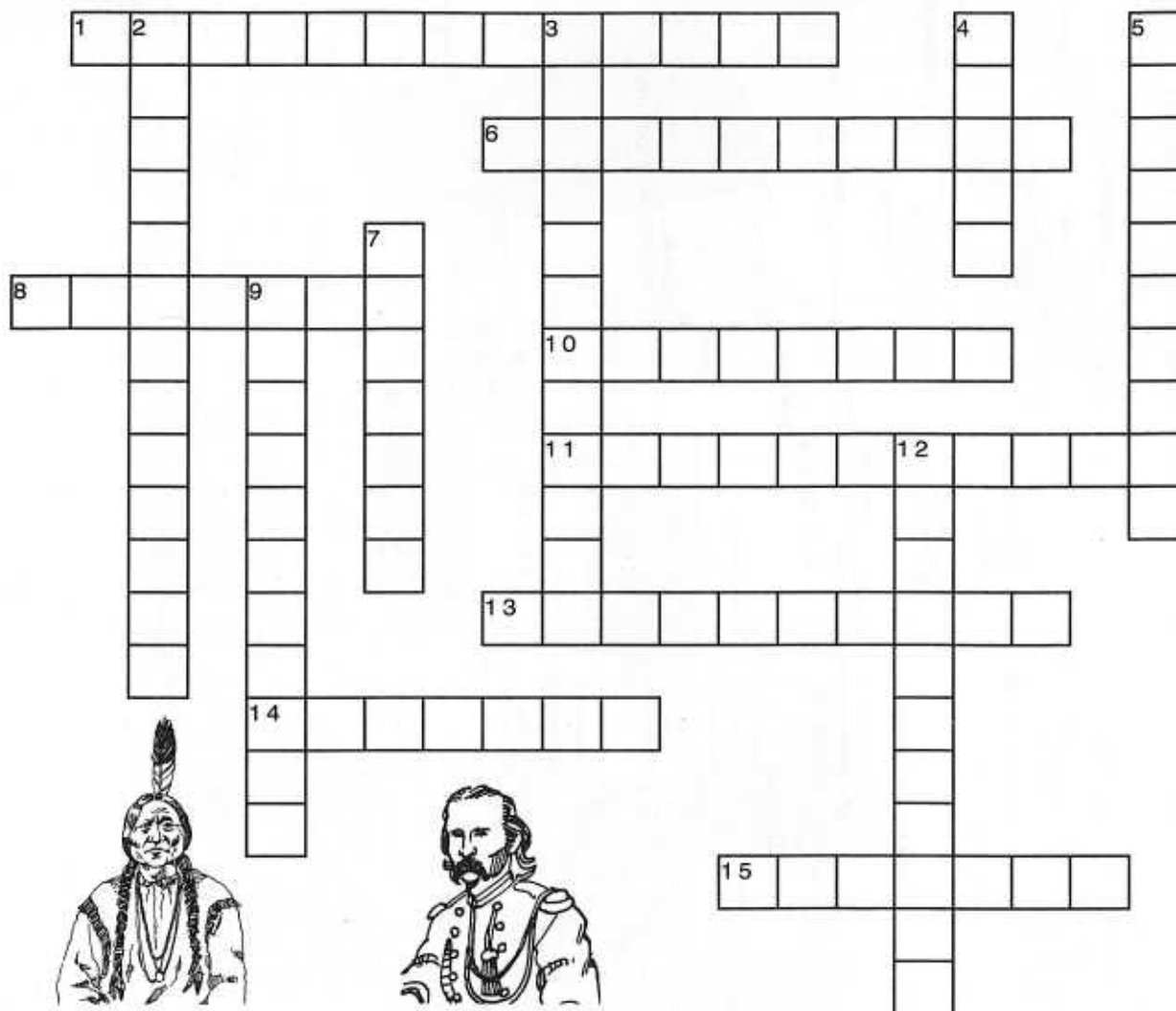
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Crossword Puzzle



Use the clues below to complete the crossword puzzle.



ACROSS

1. Place where Custer and his men were killed (three words)
6. Colonel who was marching east from Fort Shaw in Montana (two words)
8. Present-day state in which the Battle of the Little Big Horn occurred
10. Tribe that joined with Sioux led by Crazy Horse
11. Sioux chief who established a camp on the Little Big Horn River (two words)
13. Sioux chief who led the warriors at the Rosebud River
14. River where General Crook encountered a large group of Sioux and Cheyenne
15. Custer was a lieutenant _____.

DOWN

2. This Bureau was supposed to supply the Sioux with food (two words)
3. Commander of the Seventh Cavalry (two words)
4. The Northern Pacific Railroad was planning to build on land claimed by the _____.
5. Where gold was found in the Dakota Territory (two words)
7. Custer refused to take this kind of gun with him
9. General who marched west from Fort Abraham Lincoln in Dakota Territory (two words)
12. General who marched northwest from Fort Laramie in Wyoming (two words)